

CLARKE ISLAND (BASS STRAIT) NOTES.—It is a serious fact, at least as far as those who make a living by them are concerned, that the Mutton-Bird (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) is getting visibly scarcer. Last season the catch was far less than usual, and this year only about half the number have been taken, and these much under the regular size and weight. The scarcity may possibly be accounted for by this—namely, in November and December, when the eggs were hatching, terrific downfalls of rain occurred, which filled up a great many of the holes with sand and water. As far as being thin and small, one can only conjecture that the food supply was not so plentiful as usual. The principal island (Chappell) has again been leased for grazing sheep, as it is contended that no damage is done if they are taken off shortly before the laying season. Granted that they are not so harmful as cattle, still they do not certainly improve matters, especially as the stock is never off to time.

The Cape Barren Goose (*Cercopsis*) has laid very early this year, as some eggs were taken in June, and were then found to be hard set. Their breeding season is somewhat hard to define, as one will also get fresh eggs in September. This is in itself somewhat of a protection to the bird.

The Wild Duck of any species is a *rara avis* this year, and one could spend a day amongst the numerous little lakes here and would then perhaps see only half a dozen.

The Brush Bronze-wing Pigeon (*Phaps elegans*), on the contrary, is very numerous, it being quite a common sight to see seven or eight together. Their invariable haunts are under the wild cherry (*Exocarpus*) bushes, where they feed largely on the old cherry-stones amongst the dead leaves at the foot of the tree.

Brown Quails (*Synæcus australis*) are also in force. It is curious to notice the difference between the birds that frequent the uplands and those that prefer the plains. The former will be large and strong on the wing, while the latter are often so feeble that they will only fly a few yards, and one can then often catch them. They are mostly very thin.

The Olive Thickhead (*Pachycephala olivacea*), which breeds largely here, is noticeably numerous, but the different species of Honey-eaters are scarce as yet. These, however, do not make themselves conspicuous until August and September, lying close during the winter months.

I have not seen a Black Crow-Shrike (*Strepera fuliginosa*) for months; generally these birds are a most constant companion, frequenting the sea-beach and feeding on the numberless sandhoppers that exist in the cast-up sea-weed.—J. D. MACLAINE.  
21/7/04.

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REMARKS ON CERTAIN MELITHREPTI.—About three years ago Mr. Fred. L. Berney forwarded from Homestead (North Queensland) a Honey-eater which I could not altogether recognize. He

kindly caused other specimens, taken by Mr. J. H. Smedley, to be forwarded later. Judging by this material (four skins) there appear grounds for making a new variety, if not subspecies.

The new bird most resembles *Melithreptus lætior*, from which it differs in its general darker tone of colouring and in the bare space round the eye being *greenish-blue* instead of *bright yellow* (Gould) or *greenish-yellow* (Hall-Rogers).\* It has been stated that *M. lætior* may be only a very fine example of *M. gularis*. *M. gularis* is a much heavier species, and otherwise quite distinct. It has been taken in Victoria, where *M. lætior* is never seen, and appears to be the mainland form of the still larger *M. validirostris* of Tasmania. Mr. A. J. North mentions that *M. lætior* is found in the Gulf district of Northern Queensland† and in the event of the "Check-List" Committee separating the Eastern from the Western and interior form I would suggest the name *Melithreptus carpentariana* for the North Queensland bird. Subjoined is its description:—

*Male*.—Head, nape, and ear coverts jet black; band round the nape of the neck pure white; upper surface from hind-neck to upper tail coverts greenish-yellow; wings dark brown or fuscous, the feathers narrowly margined with grey or light brown; tail dark brown, the feathers more or less margined with greenish-yellow; cheeks white; rest of under surface (including under wing coverts) buffy or ashy white, darkest on throat, and blending into a distinct blackish chin. Bill black; tarsi light-coloured or yellowish; bare space round the eye pale greenish-blue.

*Female*.—A little less inferior in colouring and size.

*Young*.—Upper surface, including the head (excepting the nape stripe, whitish), has a greyish-brown tinge, with the rump and upper tail coverts only yellowish; under surface darker, also greenish skin round the eye darker than in adults. Bill yellowish (like the feet) except the point of the upper mandible, which is blackish.

*Dimensions in inches*.—Male.—Total length, 5.75; culmen, .5; wing, 3.24; tail, 2.5; tarsus, .75. Female.—Total length, 5.5; culmen, .5; wing, 3.14; tail, 2.4; tarsus, .75. Young.—Total length, 5.0; culmen, .5; wing, 3.05; tail, 2.3; tarsus, .7.—A. J. CAMPBELL.

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SURVEY CAMP NOTES, 1903. — 14th July. — Betcherrygahs (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), Martins (*Artamus leucogaster*), and Peewees (*Grallina picata*) breeding on Clermont lagoon.

24th July. — Grey Flycatchers (*Myiagra albiscapa*) with young; Magpies (*Gymnorhina tibicen*), with nest, chasing all and sundry (Peak Downs).

18th August. — Cotherstone. — Channelbill (*Scythrops nova-*

\* *Emu*, vol. i., p. 101 (1902).

† *Proc. Roy. Soc. S.A.*, vol. xxii., p. 151 (1898).